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|  | **PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF**  **BULGARIA**  **TO THE UNITED NATIONS** |

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**Commission for Social Development**

**Fifty-third Session, New York, 4 – 13 February 2015 (CR 4)**

**Agenda Item 3 a) – Priority theme: Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world**

***New York, Thursday, 5 February 2015***

**Statement of the Bulgarian Youth Delegates**

**Ms. Ani Koleva and Ms. Radina Koleva**

**Madam Chair,**

We are honored to address the Commission for Social Development and share our vision and concerns regarding important challenges that young people face especially when it comes to social inclusion and youth unemployment. Young people have the capacity and will to participate in setting goals and implementing strategies towards sustainable development. We, as Bulgarian youth delegates, call for an inclusive post-2015 development agenda based on human rights and encourage young people’s voices to be heard as negotiations on sustainable development goals enter their final and crucial stage.

1995 Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development affirmed social inclusion as part of the key goals of social development and defined an inclusive society as a “society for all, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play”. 20 years later, social inclusion of young people is still a huge challenge all over the world. Social inclusion of young people with disabilities, in particular, is even more difficult having in mind their specific vulnerability and the additional prejudice and barriers that they face every day.

Young people with disabilities are much more likely to be excluded from the educational system than any other social group and as a result unemployment rates are higher than the average. For that reason, greater awareness and understanding of disabilities is fundamental. Ensuring social inclusion and providing opportunities for full and equal participation of all young people, especially those with disabilities, will be extremely beneficial as the youth could contribute a lot both to social development and economic growth.

An example of an effective form of youth participation is the UN Youth Delegates` Program which allows young people to participate in the work of the UN and advocate for youth issues. In addition, choosing cities for youth capitals contributes to promoting youth initiatives and promotes youth participation. We are happy that the Bulgarian city of Varna has been selected as Youth capital for 2017 and the efforts of young people have been recognized.

Based on these and many other examples of youth activities, it is not wrong to say that young people have proved and deserved their place in decision- and policy-making processes that affect their lives both on national and international level. We strongly believe that when negotiating the post-2015 Development Agenda young people should be given the opportunity to be part of building the world we want and shaping our common future based on human rights and fundamental values such as equity, equality and social justice.

**Madam Chair,**

If we are to shape our common future together we need to ensure the participation and representation of all social groups, young people included. In order to achieve this, a number of challenges need to be overcome to allow young people to fulfill their full potential. But how can we achieve this if young people are denied meaningful participation?

Youth unemployment has emerged as one of the greatest challenges with regard to social inclusion of young people, especially of young people with disabilities. A job not only provides financial security and access to social protection, but it also preserves an individual’s human dignity, develops his or her soft skills and enables further personal growth. Therefore, an improved access to quality employment is an efficient and straightforward path to combatting poverty and promoting social integration. In contrast, limited or no access to jobs destroys young people’s self-esteem, leads to disillusionment, and erodes their trust in institutions, which hinders their motivation to be outspoken participants in civil society and prevents them from being active contributors to development.

Unfortunately, the job market is unfavorable to young people. 40% of the unemployed worldwide are youth. According to data from the International Labor Organization, the global unemployment rate is 4.5%, while the global youth unemployment rate is 12,6%. This makes young people three times more likely to be unemployed. In fact, even if young people manage to secure employment, they are much more likely than adults to fall back in an unemployment spell. During economic downturn, young employees are not only the “last in” but also the “first out”. This is so because on one hand, it is more costly for employers to lay off older workers, and on the other hand young workers are less likely to have had work experience, have fewer skills, and are often on a temporary contract.

Youth unemployment is a problem not only for the affected individual, but also for the economy as a whole. Firstly, unemployment among young people implies unutilized labor potential and, thus, has a negative impact on potential economic growth. Secondly, youth unemployment means that there is less labor input from those who, despite having less work experience than older workers, are supposed to improve production processes with their innovative thinking.

It was a step in the right direction when back in 1995 in Copenhagen, the international community committed to reduce unemployment. However, 20 years later we have yet to see the real implementation.

**Madam Chair,**

Social development requires the inclusion of all social groups, especially young people. We have both the will and the ability to design a world built on human rights. Change, however, is not going to happen on its own. We need to act now.